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GEORGE ARMSTRONG, Rome, Wednesday, reports American efforts to halt Communist progress in Italy

# Godfather CIA's favourite nephews

NO ROMAN barque was rocked by the report from Washington that the CIA has launched a new, and rather puny, campaign in Italy to subsidise the anti-Communist parties, "principally the Christian Democrats."

For the past three years, all the political parties, except the Communists, have been accused of receiving funds from American companies (mostly representing petrol, banana, computer, and pharmaceutical multinationals who can be considered to be the very godfathers of the CIA). At one point, six Cabinet Ministers were named as recipients of slush funds, but Parliament decided to drop investigations against all but two of the six.

As for the new six million dollar package ("it shows

that Kissinger cares" would be a suitable tag for the gift parcel), there may be another Parliamentary fuss but probably nothing will come of it.

It has never been a secret that the Christian Democrats are the favourite nephews and nieces of Uncle Sam.

When politicians are asked about the funds their generic reply in the past has been that they were only coming to the aid of their stricken party, though the actual donors have learned that a lot of the American money went into private Swiss bank accounts. In Rome, that is still considered the only true bulwark against a Communist takeover in Italy. No Italian MP or Cabinet Minister has ever offered his resignation when accused of having accepted "subsidies."

Last month, in what seemed like a CIA-inspired press leak (the boys are having some trouble proving their worth in Washington), it was reported that the CIA had given the Christian Democrats "and the Socialists" nearly 10 million dollars for their 1972 General Election campaign. The former issued a three-line denial a few days later. The country's two Socialist parties pointed fingers at each other.

Since the Social Democrats are the anti-Communists, and since their party itself is living proof of American financial interference in Italian politics (their split from the Socialist Party in 1947 always has been considered to have been engineered and supported by American trade unions), they would be the more obvious

CIA recipients.

The latest report of the mere \$6 millions allocated for Italy last month by the CIA is almost risible. The Christian Democrats already get more than £10 millions a year as part of their share of the state's subsidies to all political parties.

The extra CIA bonus will come in handy, of course, even if it were only intended as a token gesture of solidarity. Perhaps it helped pay for Senator Amintore Fanfani's surprise trip to Peking and Canton last month, a visit which was intended to alter his image as a hide-bound anti-Communist, and to give him more prestige at the coming Christian Democrat Party conference.

Washington's concern over the Communist advances in Italy is understandable. If they cannot understand that investing even peanuts in the Christian Democrat Party is as smart as investing in a Taiwanese hula-hoop company, then they're dumber than we thought.

As long as the next Italian Government is to be chosen by the voters, no amount of money will be enough to launder the nearly 30 years of accumulated dirt in the folds of the Christian Democrat Party, or convince the voters to give them their votes.

Despite Italy's sometimes Latin-American political colouring, it is still the voter and not the CIA who decides who shall run the country.

There is nothing on the horizon which would suggest that the next Government after elections will not include the Communists.